

to assess the final damages. Consequently, this report will attempt to document those answers that can be made with the obvious limitations.

On August 24, 1979, the Committee on Environmental Affairs held its first meeting in Corpus Christi to learn what action was being taken to safeguard the Texas coast. Various federal and state officials described their functions regarding the oil spill crisis.

On October 16, 1979, the Committee met again to discuss safeguards to prevent blowouts from occurring. Preventive training and educational programs were discussed. The Committee also heard testimony about developing oil spill cooperatives in the state.

In addition to the hearings, the Committee sought comments from the federal and state agencies, the universities, and industry. The Texas Department of Water Resources cooperated fully with the committee and continues to send progress reports concerning the flow of the oil as well as the cleanup operation. The General Land Office prepared a chart and supporting documentation showing the authority of the state to regulate oil, gas, and related operations to prevent oil spills. (See Appendix E)

In order to fulfill the request of the Speaker of the House to undertake an in-depth study of the threats posed both to the coastal environment and the economy of Texas by the Mexican oil spill, and at the request of the Speaker, the Committee on Environmental Affairs engaged the services of the Texas System of Natural Resources (TSNL) on a staff basis to assist in the evaluation process of the environmental impact.

FEDERAL/STATE CONTINGENCY PLANS

The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan¹ was developed in compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act of 1977.² This plan seeks to insure a coordinated Federal response at the scene of a discharge of oil or hazardous substance. The On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) coordinates and directs the Federal response to spills, and discharge removal efforts at the scene of a discharge. The Coast Guard is charged with providing the OSC in the coastal

regions of the United States. (See Figure I) The Environmental Protection Agency has that responsibility in inland regions.

The state government is represented on the Regional Response Team (RRT) by the Texas Department of Water Resources (TDWR) and provides advice and assistance to the OSC. At the request of the OSC, state resources can be utilized directly to pick up or contain spills.

In addition to the clean-up activities conducted under the federal fund set up under Section 311 of the Federal Clean Water Act of 1977, clean-up activities can be conducted under subchapter (g), "Coastal Oil and Hazardous Spill and Prevention Control" of the Texas Water Code.³ These activities must be conducted in accord with the National Contingency Plan. The executive director of the TDWR places the resources of the state at the disposal of the OSC, if he is present, or engages in cleanup activities when directed to do so by the OSC. (See Figure II) When no OSC is present and no action is being taken by an agency of the federal government, the executive director of TDWR may act to clean up oil under Section 26.264(h)(2). (See Figure III)

Pursuant to Section 26.264(f), the TDWR and the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (TDHW) have an existing contract relating to the manner in which Highway Department resources are to be used.

Also relating to oil spill cleanup is the State of Texas Disaster Plan which provides for the coordination of state agency efforts in the event of disasters by the Division of Disaster Emergency Services of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).⁴

FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT

Shortly after the IXTOC I well exploded in the Bay of Campeche, the United States Coast Guard began its preparations for the potential onslaught of oil in the waters of Texas. The command center and the regional news office were established in Corpus Christi. On July 27, 1979 Captain Roger Madson relieved Commander Joel Sipes as the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (OSC). The Scientific Coordinator was named, Mr. John Robinson of NOAA and LCDR James Paskewich